



UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

The Five Pillars:

Main precepts of faith

Islam is second to Christianity in number of believers. It originated in the Arabian Peninsula in 622 A.D. when, according to tradition, God conveyed a series of revelations to Muhammed, the religion's founder.

There are many sects of Islam, but all Muslims -- the followers of Islam -- hold the same basic beliefs:

► **PILGRIMAGE:** All Muslims, if they have the means, must make the pilgrimage to Mecca - the "hajj" - at least once

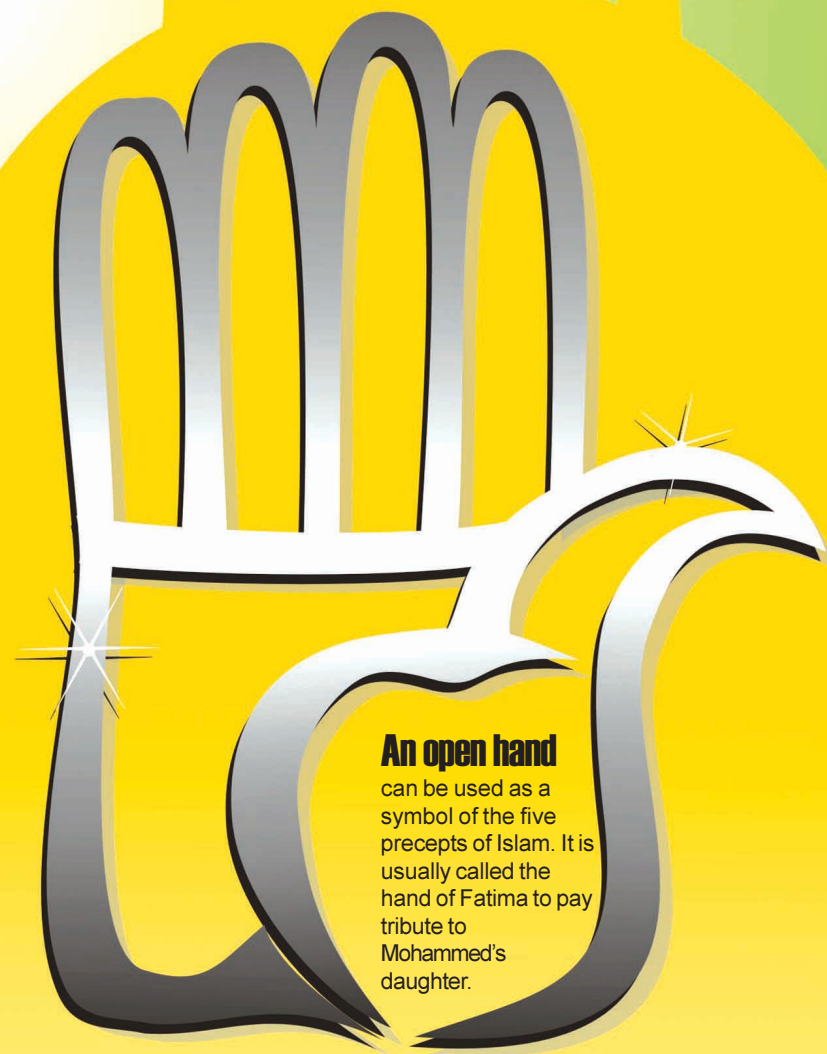
► **FAITH:** The "shahada" or testimony - "There is no God but God and Mohammed is the Prophet of God"

► **PRAYER:** Traditionally, Muslims pray five times a day while facing Mecca, their holy city; on Fridays, they attend the mosque to pray and listen to a sermon

► **ALMS GIVING:** Preferably one-fortieth of a believer's yearly income; used to help the poor and spread the faith

► **FASTING:** Muslims must fast during Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar year. They abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual relations from sunrise to sunset

► **POSSIBLE SIXTH PILLAR, THE JIHAD:** "Jihad" roughly translates to "striving in the way of God." Muslims are exhorted to fight the holy war, spreading the faith.



An open hand

can be used as a symbol of the five precepts of Islam. It is usually called the hand of Fatima to pay tribute to Mohammed's daughter.

Illustration by Senior Airman Morgan White



QUESTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

Q: What is Islam?

A: Muslims believe in one God and in the Day of Judgment and individual accountability for actions.

Muslims believe in a chain of prophets beginning with Adam and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus. God's message was reaffirmed and finalized by the Prophet Muhammad.

Islam is a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness. Muslims pray in a mosque in the same way that Christians pray in a church.

Q: What is the Koran?

A: The Koran, or Quran, is the Muslim holy book, like the Bible is to Christianity.

It is the record of the exact words revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad. It was memorized by Muhammad and then dictated to his companions.

Base chaplain tells people about Islam misconceptions

by Senior Airman Steve Grever
Minot Air Force Base public affairs

Some people in the military, and the world, believe that the religion of Islam is to blame for the terrorist attacks on the United States as well as other countries throughout the world.

Some believe people of the Islamic faith should be feared and distrusted because of the acts of extremist Muslims who committed the terrorist acts upon the United States Sept. 11.

Many people throughout the world, however, are working toward educating people about the misconceptions people have about Islam. One such person is Chaplain (Maj.) Allen Heckman, from the base chapel.

Heckman goes out to squadron commander's calls emphasizing that Islam does not advocate vio-

lence and terrorism. "At commander's calls, my emphasis has been to tell people that Islam is a religion that advocates peace and submission," Heckman said. "It means peace within yourself and your surroundings."

Heckman also commented on the book of Islam, the Koran. "In the Koran, Chapter 5, verse 2, it says 'anyone who saves one life, it is as if he has saved the whole of mankind. Anyone who has killed another person it is as if he has killed the whole of mankind,'" he said.

The third topic Heckman discussed with the troops was about the definition of jihad. "Jihad has a much wider definition than what we've heard," he said. "It means to strive in the cause of God. It means to strive against any struggles that are in your life. The highest level of a jihad can only be declared by leadership or a Muslim head of state following the Koran."

Heckman has worked to teach base people that the war on terrorism is not against the Islamic religion, but against any people who commit terrorism or harbor terrorists. "History demonstrates the horrors that result when a cultural or ethnic group is targeted as evil or disposable," he said. "The attack on September 11 was not an attack on a religion by another religion. The terrorist action ... was an attack on the United States, and ultimately the world, by a group of misguided power-hungry international leaders. Our task is to remain focused on the perpetrators of this crime and not confuse them or their rhetoric with the majority of the Muslim world."

The chaplain said he is available to talk with people in their units or at commander's calls on issues dealing with Islam or terrorism. For more information and to schedule meetings, call 723-3633.